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United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea
Twelfth meeting
20-24 June 2011

Contribution to the twelfth meeting of the United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea

Submitted by the European Union

1. The European Union is pleased to share with the Secretariat and other States its further views in preparation for the twelfth meeting of the United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea.

2. As decided by the General Assembly in paragraph 231 of its resolution 65/37, the Consultative Process will focus its discussions at its twelfth meeting on contributing to the assessment, in the context of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, of progress to date and the remaining gaps in the implementation of the outcomes of the major summits on sustainable development and addressing new and emerging challenges.

3. The European Union welcomes this topic, as it provides us with a unique opportunity to ensure that the importance of oceans in the context of sustainable development is recognized at the highest political level. This year's Informal Consultative Process should seek to ensure that the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development includes the objective of substantial progress in terms of more effective oceans conservation and management, through adequate frameworks, policies and mechanisms, with the view to strengthening all three pillars of sustainable development.

4. Oceans have been addressed at previous major summits on sustainable development, including under chapter 17 of Agenda 21 and paragraphs 30 and 36 of the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development. At these meetings, commitments have been made with regard to the sustainable development of oceans and coastal areas. While important political efforts have been undertaken, significant shortcomings in the implementation of these policies should be recognized. Effective measures need to be developed to address these

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shortcomings, and the European Union is willing to engage in negotiations to that end.

5. The Informal Consultative Process discussions may be a useful contribution to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, and the European Union would, in particular, welcome a discussion on the following areas, given their importance to sustainable development:

(a) The way forward towards marine spatial planning tools, including the actual establishment of marine protected areas including representative networks;

(b) Prior environmental impact assessments and strategic environmental assessments;

(c) Implementation, compliance and enforcement of conservation and management measures;

(d) Fisheries, including overcapacity, subsidies, illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing, the role of scientific advice, destructive fishing practices, the impact on threatened or vulnerable species, and the link between fisheries, food security and sustainable development;

(e) Impacts of rising sea levels, namely on small island developing States and the sustainability of coastal communities.

6. The European Union favours the reform of regional fisheries management organizations and other management organizations, with a view to enhancing the application of modern conservation and management principles, such as the precautionary principle and the ecosystem approach, and to increasing transparency and accountability, including through regular reporting and reviews of regional fisheries management organizations at the international level and by ensuring consistent international oceans governance oversight at the international level. Such progress will require the development of specific measures at the local, national, regional and global levels. In addition, the European Union remains of the view that, in order to facilitate the elaboration and implementation of some of these measures, the development of an implementing agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea would constitute an important step forward. We remain ready to discuss with our negotiation partners how the development of such an institutional mechanism should be initiated and which issues it should seek to address.

7. The European Union would like to suggest Mr. Philip Weaver, coordinator of the Hotspot Ecosystem Research and Man's Impact on European Seas (HERMIONE) project, to serve as a panellist. HERMIONE is a collaborative project funded under the Framework 7 programme of the European Commission. HERMIONE is the successor to the highly successful Hotspot Ecosystem Research on the Margins of the European Seas (HERMES) project, which concluded in March 2009. It is designed to bring about a major advance in our knowledge of the functioning of deep-sea ecosystems and their contribution to the production of goods and services.

8. HERMIONE will address some of the key gaps in socio-economic and governance knowledge and methodologies, as well as developing and implementing appropriate science-policy interface mechanisms to ensure the policy relevance of

the research and to facilitate the translation of research into policy advice at the national, European and international levels.

9. The European Union looks forward to a constructive round of negotiations and hopes, through this submission, to have contributed to this objective.